

Dear members of the first Unitarian society New Jersey,

This past year has shown the rest of the country what UU's have long known; that the structural racism inherent in our society requires direct and intentional action in order to provide an equitable and just beloved community. In response, our board created a working group to effect adoption of an 8<sup>th</sup> UU principle, in line with the work being done in many other congregations across the country. While you have seen the introduction of an 8<sup>th</sup> principle minute in our weekly service as well as several Sunday services on this topic, the first major milestone will be the adoption of a resolution at our annual meeting next month. This resolution is not an end in itself, but rather a binding promise that commits us as a congregation to the long and difficult journey towards racial justice. To this end, please review the attached resolution. We ask that you do so prior to the service on April xx, at which time we will have an opportunity to discuss it as a congregation prior to the annual meeting.

Prior to your review of the resolution, we feel it would be helpful to explain what the resolution is, what it isn't, and how it was developed.

A resolution is a rather formal construct that, by its nature, contains precise, legalistic language. When reading a formal resolution, it's helpful to understand the structure. The "wherefore" clauses provide context and justification for the action being taken, but it is the "resolved" clauses that are actually actionable and binding. To put it another way, strictly speaking the wherefores are not necessary, but the resolves are. This resolution, in particular, is a commitment to act. However, it does not contain a plan or specific goals. The development of those things will be the first undertaking upon the adoption of the resolution. Whether they will be developed by the existing working group or some other structure is a matter for the board to decide.

This resolution was developed in several iterations over the past several months by the working group in cooperation with others. The starting point was sample resolutions from other congregations and material provided by the UUA. Drafts were reviewed by a virtual focus group of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) current and former friends and members of our society.

When reviewing the text of the resolution, please keep in mind that the adoption of this resolution is intended to commit us to work that will be challenging at times. The language must reflect this; we should avoid any inclination to soften what has been written. Look to see if the language is inclusive of all racial identities, if it is structured in a way that commits us to action and holds us accountable, and if it clearly calls out individual and institutional responses.

Please forward questions and comments to Denise Soppas.